A PERSUASIVE TO Lay-Conformity:

Or, the Reasonableness of

CONSTANT COMMUNION

WITH THE

Church of *England*,

Represented to the

Dissenting Laity.

By BENJAMIN HOADLY. *M. A.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Reasonableness of Conformity to the Church of *England*, Represented to the Dissenting Ministers. In answer to the Reasons for Non-Conformity, set forth in the Tenth Chapter of Mr. *Calamy*'s Abridgment of Mr. *Baxter*'s History of his Life and Times. By *BENJAMIN HOADLY*, M. A. Printed for *Timothy Child*, at the *White-Hart* in St. *Paul*'s Church Yard.

Advertiſement.

I *Deſire it may be obſerved, That the following Papers concern only ſuch of the* Diſſenters *as judge* Conformity *to the* Church eſtabliſhed, *to be, in it ſelf, lawful. As for* thoſe *amongſt them who are ſo little inſtructed in the nature of the* Goſpel, *as to think* Communion *with our* Church *Unlawful and* Antichriſtian, *I could not hope to convince them of the contrary, in ſo ſmall a Treatiſe as this: And therefore chuſe rather to refer them to what hath been already written on this Head, and to the judgment of the beſt and moſt learned amongſt their own* Teachers; *who profeſs themſelves always ready to do juſtice to the* Church *of* England, *and to the Cauſe of Truth, by endeavouring to remove ſuch groundleſs Prejudices out of the Minds of their Followers. And, whatever the Iſſue of theſe Papers may prove, it is to be hoped that the Perſons concerned will, at leaſt, think it no Crime or Injury, that we*

heartily deſire their Conſtant Conformity, *and endeavour to perſwade them to it. I have nothing farther to add, but that I have choſen to argue with them, chiefly from the Conſiderations of* Peace *and* Unity: *becauſe this Method is moſt eaſie to be underſtood; and moſt likely to move all who have any concern left for the Honour of* Chriſtianity, *or the Intereſt of the* Proteſtant Cauſe.

A PERSUASIVE TO Lay-Conformity, &c.

I. THERE is no one thing, in which all *Proteſtants* amongſt us, as well *Diſſenters* as *Conformiſts*, do more agree, than in this plain Propoſition, *That all cauſleſs and unneceſſary Diviſions and Diſtinctions, are moſt carefully and Conſcientiouſly to be avoided by Chriſtians.* In a deep ſenſe of this Truth, the beſt *Writers* on all ſides, have, with one Conſent, and with one common Zeal and Concern, preſſed upon the Conſciences of Men, the Duty and Importance of *Peace* and *Concord*, and the Guilt and Miſchief of *needleſs Diſtinctions and Diviſions.* This being ſo univerſally acknowledged, and ſo conſtantly taught, I ſhall not here enlarge upon it, but ſhall only make this uſe of it at preſent, that it is the judgment, not only of the *Conforming Divines*, but of your own *Teachers* alſo, That *it concerns us all, as much as the Favour of Almighty God concerns us, to have a ſacred and conſtant Regard to publick Peace and Unity.*

II. Now there are but *two* Methods, in which our *Unity* can poſſibly be compaſſed; and a period put to all thoſe Miſchiefs and Evils, which have their Foundation in the diſtinction of our Churches,

Churches, and the different Modes of Worſhip ſet up amongſt us. For this muſt be done, either by the entire compliance of the *Conformiſts* with *you*, and the alteration of the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, according to your wiſhes; or, by *your* Compliance with *them*, and your Conformity to the *Church* already *Eſtabliſhed*.

III. There is a *third* Method which perhaps ſome ſincere Chriſtians (who know the Goodneſs and Charity of their own Tempers) may be apt to judge fully ſufficient for this *end* without either of the former: And that is, the univerſal Practice of Love, and Charity, and mutual Forbearance, amidſt our different Modes of Worſhip. And I would to God, that there were any thing in the Tempers of Men to incline us to hope for an univerſal Practice of ſuch God-like Virtues. But where is there any Ground for us to expect this? Some few, it may be, imagine themſelves poſſeſs'd of a true Chriſtian Temper: But of how ſmall importance is this to be eſteemed, when we conſider the great Numbers of thoſe who are wholly unacquainted with it; when we daily ſee how much Heat and Violence is entirely owing to our Religious diſtinctions; and what a handle they give, as well to deſigning Men at Home, as to our profeſſed Enemies Abroad, to inflame us againſt one another, and to make us the Inſtruments of bringing about *their* Deſigns? Since, therefore, this is ſo very evident, and open to the obſervation of all; and ſince you will all agree, that it is the indiſpenſable Duty of us all to do whatever lies in our Power towards an eſtabliſhed *Peace* and *Unity*; conſider whether the way to accompliſh this, be to look after our own Tempers only, without regarding the evil effects our *Practice* may have upon

upon others; or to consult the natural tendencies of our Actions, and to guide our Practice in all lawful things, as we find it most conducive to the publick *Peace*, and least likely to prove the occasion of Heat, and Discord, and Variance, to others.

This seems to me plainly recommended to all *Christians*, by the Law of Nature, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ; tho' they could be secure of preserving their own Tempers and Passions, within the bounds of Regularity and Decency, without this. For this results evidently from that obligation Christians are under, to regard conscientiously the Good of their Neighbour, the Honour of their Holy Profession, and the Interest of that Society they belong to. But indeed, were they only to consult the Happiness of their own Breasts, and had they no concern with any besides themselves, this would certainly be the surest way of consulting and establishing their own Quiet, and good Temper; to avoid whatever might probably, or could possibly, tend in its nature to taint their Hearts with Sowrness, or Malice, or Passion; as all will acknowledge, that *Divisions* do, of what sort soever they be. However I put it not upon this, at present, because some may evade this, and pretend to the greatest security of their own *Charity*, and good *Temper*: And because I write to those, who must be sensible, that we have all of us a solemn account to give of our Behaviour, as it respects the World about us; and that we are all severely to answer for the evil effects of our *Practice* upon *Humane Society*, if it be found at last that we might have prevented them, and would not; or that we might have seen the way

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to *Peace*, and yet wilfully ſhut our Eyes againſt the Light. This, therefore, I lay down as a certain Rule, to direct us all in our Conduct, *That it is our indiſpenſable Duty to chuſe that Method of Practice, which tends moſt to the Happineſs of that Society to which we belong; provided it be conſiſtent with that Duty we owe to God; and with our own eternal Salvation.*

IV. This being a certain and undoubted Maxim, it follows from hence, That it is your indiſpenſable Duty to practice *Conſtant Conformity* to the *eſtabliſhed Church*, as long as you acknowledge, that nothing is required of you in it, which is ſinful or unlawful; for this lies within your Province, and you cannot poſſibly act a better part, towards the re-uniting the divided Hearts of this Nation. You muſt either *Conform* or *Separate:* And if your choice be to be determined by the *Maxim* now laid down, it is impoſſible you ſhould refuſe to *Conform.* For all the World knows, and we daily feel, the Miſerable Conſequences of Religious Diſtinctions and Diviſions. It being therefore ſo evident, that your *Conformity* would tend to the removing theſe Evils, and to the *Unity* of this Nation, I ſhall not labour to prove to you, what you muſt be already fully convinced of. But tho' this be ſo very plain and open to the Capacities of all; and tho' your obligation to *Conformity* be, on this account, ſo manifeſt and undeniable; yet I am ſenſible, that there are ſome Hindrances and Stumbling-blocks in your way to ſo good a practice; and that you appear to your ſelves to have Reaſons on your ſide, ſufficient to incline you againſt that *Conformity* which would be ſo great a ſtep to *Peace* and *Union* amongſt us. My buſineſs, therefore,

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at preſent ſhall be, to examine thoſe *Reaſons*; and to endeavour to remove thoſe *Hindrances*, hoping that you will judge ſincerely and impartially in a matter of ſo great and univerſal Concern.

V. *One* of theſe *hindrances* I take to be founded on that reaſon, you think, you have to expect that the *Eſtabliſhment* ſhould be altered according to your minds. For ſince our Unity may be effected as well by the *Compliance* of the *Conformiſts* with *You*, as by *your Conformity* to the *Church* already *Eſtabliſhed*, You ſeem to imagine, that it is as much the Duty of the *Conformiſts* to comply with *You*, as it is *your* Duty to comply with *Them*; and that it is as reaſonable for *you* to expect *their* Conformity to *you*, as it is for *them* to expect *your* Conformity to *them*: And ſo not to think your ſelves obliged to *Conformity*, on this account. Now, in order to remove this difficulty out of your way, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew you,

1. That it is not as reaſonable for *you* to expect *their* Compliance with *you*, as for *them* to expect *your* Conformity to the *Eſtabliſhed Church*. And,

2. That, ſuppoſing it were as reaſonable, yet this would be no good Argument againſt your *Conformity*.

1. That it is not as reaſonable for *you* to expect the *Compliance* of the *Conformiſts* with *you*, as it is for *them* to expect your *Conformity* to the *Church* already *eſtabliſhed*. And indeed, I cannot think that you your ſelves can think it ſo: For you all ſeem to agree with us in the great neceſſity, or at leaſt expediency, of ſome particular Form of Church-Government, and Worſhip;

and of the eſtabliſhment of this by *Civil Laws*. Were it in your Power, there is no doubt but you would think your ſelves obliged to eſtabliſh that particular Form, which to your ſelves ſhould ſeem moſt agreeable to the nature of the *Goſpel*, and the end of *Publick Aſſemblies*. Now you muſt be ſenſible that an *Eſtabliſhment* can ſignifie nothing, nor be of any uſe, unleſs it be ſuppoſed, either that it is ſo apparently perfect, and ſo ſuitable to the Wiſhes of all Perſons, that none can find fault with it, or diſcover any thing amiſs in the Conſtitution of it: Or, that there is an obligation lying upon every Chriſtian to have ſo much regard to *publick Peace and Decency*, as to conform himſelf to what is eſtabliſhed, if nothing be required of him but what he acknowledges lawful.

As to the *former* of theſe Suppoſitions, It is undeniably beyond the power of Man to frame any Conſtitution, or draw up any *Form*, or *Directory* for *Worſhip*, that ſhall be agreeable to all Perſons concerned, or free from Defects and Imperfections. And therefore, were the *Eſtabliſhed Form* exactly ſuch as *you* could wiſh, there is no Argument you could urge to preſs *others* to *Conformity* to it, but what concludes now for the neceſſity of *your* Conformity to what is now Eſtabliſhed; nor can there be any reaſon for *your* expecting *now* that the *Eſtabliſhed Form* ſhould be alter'd according to *your* Wiſhes, which would not equally encourage *others* to expect the alteration of any other *Eſtabliſhment*, had *you* order'd it exactly as *you* thought beſt. If, therefore, *you* ſhould not think it reaſonable in *others* to withold their *Conformity* till the *Eſtabliſhed Form* was alter'd to their Minds, provided it were ſuch as *you* could wiſh it; you cannot think

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it reaſonable in your ſelves to expect the alteration of what is now *Eſtabliſhed*, meerly becauſe it is not agreeable to your Deſires. And as *you* would, in that caſe, think it much more reaſonable for thoſe *others* to *conform* to your *Eſtabliſhment*, than to require the alteration of it to their Minds: So judge concerning your ſelves now, who are axactly in the ſame Circumſtances; and think it much more reaſonable for *you* to comply with what is already *Eſtabliſhed*, than to inſiſt upon the *alteration* of it according to your Wiſhes. For, if there can be no Argument urged now for Separation, under pretence of inſiſting upon Alterations, that might not with equal force be urged by many others, had *You* your ſelves framed the *Eſtabliſhment*; And if *you* would think it unreaſonable in thoſe *others* to expect that the *Eſtabliſhment* ſhould be new model'd to their Minds; then certainly there can be no good Argument urged for your ſelves, in theſe Circumſtances: Nor can it be ſo reaſonable for *you* to expect the *Compliance* of the *Conformiſts* with *you*, as for *them* to expect *your* Compliance with the *Church* already *Eſtabliſhed*. And this leads us to the other *Suppoſition* I made, which is apparently the Opinion of all who deſire any *Eſtabliſhment*, as *you* always ſeem to do, *viz.*

That there is an obligation upon every Chriſtian, to conform himſelf to what is *Eſtabliſhed*; provided nothing be required of Him, but what He judges to be Lawful. This is plain to all who plead for an *Eſtabliſhment*: For otherwiſe, what can any *Eſtabliſhment* ſignify? To what purpoſe ſhould we deſire or labour after it, unleſs ſuch an Obligation be ſuppoſed? It is in vain to hope that any *Eſtabliſhment* can be ſo framed, as that

many Perſons will not imagine ſome Defects and Imperfections in it: And if this Imagination be ſufficient to excuſe them from complying with the *Eſtabliſhment*, it is wholly in vain to deſire, or propoſe any ſuch thing. If therefore an *Eſtabliſhment* be neceſſary, or expedient, the Rule muſt be, that it is the Duty of all *Chriſtians* to comply with it, if no ſinful terms of Communion be required of them; unleſs you will lay all *Eſtabliſhments* open to infinite Diviſions, and fruſtrate the very End for which alone they are deſigned. And if this be the *Rule* we are to go by, you cannot but think it your Duty to comply with the *Church* already *Eſtabliſhed*. For that there ought to be an Eſtabliſhment, it is *your* Opinion, as well as the Opinion of the *Conformiſts*. It is plain, therefore, that it is the concern of thoſe who are in Authority, to frame ſuch an one, as they judge moſt agreeable to the Goſpel of Chriſt, and the Ends of Religious Aſſemblies. And it is as plain, that nothing remains for others to do, but to enquire whether they can Lawfully conform to this *Eſtabliſhment*, or no. And from hence it appears, that it cannot be as reaſonable for *you* to expect the *Compliance* of your Superiors with *you*, as it is for *them* to expect *your* Conformity to what they have *Eſtabliſhed*. For it appears, how meanly ſoever you may judge of their *Eſtabliſhment*, that they have done their Duty, according to the beſt of their Judgment: And ſo nothing remains, but that you ſhould do *your* Duty. And if an *Eſtabliſhment* can ſerve any good purpoſe, it muſt be your Duty to comply with it, if you find nothing in it contrary to your Duty to God. But,

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2. Suppoſing it were as reaſonable for *you* to expect the *Compliance* of your Superiors with *you*, as it is for them to expect your *Conformity* to what they have *Eſtabliſhed*; yet this would be no argument at all againſt your *Conformity*, as long as no ſinful *Term* of *Communion* is required of *you*. For ſuppoſing that *they* do not behave themſelves exactly as *you* think they ought, and will not comply, juſt according to your deſires; I ſee not how this can poſſibly diſſolve *your* Obligation to conſult the *Peace* and *Unity* of the *Church* of *Chriſt*. Put the Caſe, that You your ſelves were in Authority, and had contrived and Eſtabliſhed a particular Form of Church-Government, and Worſhip, according to the beſt Light, and the trueſt judgment of your own Conſciences; would you think it juſtifiable, or tolerable, that a number of Men ſhould *Separate* from your *Eſtabliſhment*, not becauſe any thing was required of them which they accounted ſinful, but becauſe you would not comply with all their Demands, and new Model it according to all their Wiſhes? And yet this is juſt the Caſe before us. Your Superiors have eſtabliſhed a *Form*, as it was their Duty to do, agreeably to their beſt Judgment. *You* do not judge any thing in their Conſtitution unlawful, as far as your Compliance is concerned. But you think it highly reaſonable that they ſhould Act according to *your* Judgments, and make Alterations according to *your* Deſires: And becauſe they refuſe to do this, therefore you will Separate from them. This, I ſay, is what you could never excuſe in others; and therefore what you ought not to excuſe in your ſelves. This is what tends to the Diſſolving all *Order*, and *Decency*, in the World. For though Obedience

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be not ſuppoſed due to the *Perſons* whom you think unreaſonable; yet certainly a ſtrict Regard is due to publick *Peace* and *Unity:* And to what purpoſe do we talk of ſuch an obligation upon all Men; Or to what end do we take theſe *ſacred Words* into our Mouths; if we can diſpenſe with all regard to them, upon ſuch Pretences as theſe? If our obligation to *Compliance* be diſſolved, whenever the judgment of our Superiors is not conformable to our own, it is in vain for us to ſpeak of an *Eſtabliſhment:* And if there be never any neceſſity for us to regard *Peace* and *Unity*, but when the *Eſtabliſhment* of our Superiors is agreeable to our Wiſhes, we do but prophane thoſe bleſſed Words, when we moſt pretend to exalt and magnifie them. Certainly, it is the very Spirit of the Goſpel, to comply even with the unreaſonable demands of *others*, I mean with what ſeems to us founded on no ground; rather than to give occaſion to the leaſt degree of *Diſcord*, and *Hatred*, in the World. It is our Duty to forgive the ſharpeſt Injuries that can be offered us by our Brethren; nor can we diſpenſe with this Duty, under pretence that it as much *their* Duty to make us Reparation, and entreat our Pardon, as it is *ours* to be reconciled to them: Such Interpretations as this would effectually render vain and uſeleſs, all the Precepts of the Goſpel to this purpoſe. And if in the caſe of private Perſons and equals, we are indiſpenſably obliged to regard *Peace* and *Concord*, even tho' they perſiſt in their unreaſonable Treatment of us; certainly much more, in the caſe of Superiors, are we obliged to have regard to the ſame great Concerns, provided nothing ſinful be required of us: Becauſe it is their Duty to frame an *Eſtabliſhment* for us; becauſe

cauſe they muſt be ſuppoſed to have framed it according to the beſt light they enjoyed; becauſe they deſign no injury to any private Perſon, and becauſe there can be no *Peace* without ſuch an obligation upon us. Nor can *their* refuſal to do what *you* think reaſonable any more excuſe *you* from Compliance in all lawful things, than *your* refuſal to do what *they* judge reaſonable, can, in your own opinion, excuſe *them* from *Compliance* with *you*.

Beſides all this, If we ſhould ſuppoſe it as reaſonable for your *Superiors* to comply with *you*, as for *you* to comply with *them*; You muſt, on the other hand, acknowledge it as reaſonable for *you* to comply with *them*, as for *them* to comply with *you*. Now this Argument, it is plain, holds as ſtrongly againſt *their* compliance with *you*, as againſt *your* compliance with *them*. If it be good Reaſoning on *your* ſide, it is equally good on *theirs*: And then there cannot poſſibly be the leaſt ground ever to hope for an *Agreement*. But how ought ſuch an *Argument* to be treated amongſt Chriſtians, as demonſtrates the utter impoſſibility of *Peace* and *Unity* amongſt them? But if you will not allow it to be good Reaſoning on *their* part, as it is plain, from your expectations, you will not; then you muſt either ſhew us, that it is not the ſame Reaſoning; or you muſt think it no more an Argument againſt *your* compliance with *them*; than it is againſt *their* Compliance with *you*. For the matter plainly comes to this; If this be good Argument againſt *your* Compliance; it is equally good againſt the Compliance of your *Superiors*: And then you have no reaſon to expect *their* Compliance with *you*. But if you will not allow it to be a good Argument

gument againſt *their* Compliance with *you*, you cannot think it a good Argument againſt *your* compliance with *them:* And then you have no reaſon from hence againſt *your* Compliance with *them.*

And, indeed, the only reaſon you can have to expect the *Compliance* of your *Superiors*, muſt be this, becauſe it is the Duty of all Men, as well thoſe in *Authority* as in *Subjection*, to conſult, as much as poſſibly they can, the *Peace* and *Concord* of the *Society* to which they belong: For the Intrinſick Juſtice of *your* demands cannot ſo eaſily appear to them as *this*, and ought not to move them any farther than as it appears to them. And if this be the ground of your moſt reaſonable Expectations, this is not particularly *their* caſe, but touches your ſelves very nearly. For if this be the Duty of all Men, it is as much *your* Duty as *theirs:* And it will be found a lamentable excuſe, to plead before God at the laſt Day, that *you* neglected to promote *Concord* and *Unity* amongſt Chriſtians, becauſe *others* neglected it; and that *you* refuſed to do *your* Duty, becauſe *others* refuſed to do what *you* accounted to be *their* Duty.

I hope, therefore, I may ſafely conclude, that there cannot be ſo great Reaſon for your *Superiors* compliance with *you*, as there is for *your* compliance with *Them:* Or, ſuppoſing the contrary, that *it is your Duty, notwithſtanding, to have ſuch a regard to* Peace *and* Unity, *as to comply with* Them, *by conforming to the* Eſtabliſhment *already made by them.*

VI. The *Second* Argument I ſhall mention, by which you defend your Practice, and ſatisfie your Conſciences in your *Separation*, is founded on that regard you are obliged to have to your own *Edi-*

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fication, in your attendance upon *Publick Aſſemblies*. You argue, that you are indiſpenſably obliged to conſult your own ſpiritual Profit and Improvement; that this you cannot do ſo well, by conforming conſtantly to the *Church Eſtabliſhed*, as by frequenting *Separate Aſſemblies*; and that, therefore, you think your ſelves under an obligation to *Separate* from the *Church* of *England*. This I take to be an *Argument* the moſt univerſally received, and the moſt heartily embraced, of any that concern your *Separation*; and, therefore, I ſhall be the more careful to examine the full force of it. And, under this Head, I hope to ſhew you,

1. *That there is nothing wanting in the* Conſtitution *of the* Church *of* England, *that you can ſuppoſe neceſſary to your private* Edification.

2. *That after your private* Edification *is ſo far conſulted, it is your Duty to regard the publick* Edification *of the whole* Church *of* Chriſt.

3. *That you cannot conſult the* Edification *of the* Church *of* Chriſt *more effectually, than by promoting* Peace *and* Concord *amongſt* Chriſtians.

Theſe *three* Points will very much help to determine your Duty, as far as the matter of *Edification* is concerned.

1. *That there is nothing wanting in the* Conſtitution *of the* Church of England, *that you can ſuppoſe neceſſary to your private Edification.* The *Ends* of all our *Publick Aſſemblies* on Religious Accounts, are compleatly anſwered, if the *Conſtitution* of our *Publick Services* be ſo framed, as that we can praiſe Almighty *God*, and pray to him as we ought; and be perfectly inſtructed in our Duty, according to his Will. For the *former* of theſe purpoſes, the *Liturgy* is deſigned: For the *latter*, the *Sermons* conſtantly Preached, toge-

ther with those *Portions* of *Scripture* that are Read to the People, in the daily *Service* of the *Church*.

Now, I cannot but think, that in the serious Use of this *Liturgy*, you may be more secure of offering up to *God* such Praises and Prayers as are acceptable to him, and fit for *Publick* and *general Occasions*, than you can be in any *separate Assembly*, where the whole is left to the Discretion and Abilities of the *Minister*. There is nothing in this Service indecent; nothing unsuitable to the Majesty of him who receives it, or unbecoming the Character of those who offer it. It is composed of *Confessions*; of *Praises*, and *Thanksgivings*; of *Prayers*, and *Intercessions*; and these very well adapted to the Conditions, and Obligations, and Necessities, of the generality of *Christians*. And what could you wish for more in a *Publick Service?* Or, where can you go, where you can be certain of so good and so proper Assistances? If you say, you have been present at this *Service*, and find little entertainment in it; that it is dry and jejune; unapt to move your Affections, and raise your Devotions; consider whence this must have proceeded. Have you come to it with a hearty good Will, and a sincere Desire of relishing it? Have you thrown out of your Minds all Prejudices, and endeavoured to cure all that indifference to it, which a long disuse may have caused? Have you attended to it with Application and Seriousness? And, above all, have you prepared your Hearts before Hand, and endeavoured to furnish them with such Thoughts, and such Affections, as are proper to be expressed in all the several parts of *Publick Worship?* This is the main Point of all: And who ever hath conscientiously done this, I am perswaded, will not lightly speak

evil

evil of the *Eſtabliſhed Liturgy*; and will not eaſily be induced, either to treat it as a cold and empty Service, or to prefer ſuch *Compoſitions* before it, as He muſt ioyn with as ſoon as he hears them, and often before he can paſs a true Judgment upon them. This, indeed, is true, that the Plainneſs and Simplicity of the *Liturgy*, render it more intelligible to all Capacities, than any *Prayers* ſet up in oppoſition to it: But this Plainneſs is not ſuch as can be deſpiſed by any of the greateſt Senſe; and is ſo far from being a Blemiſh, that it is an Excellence in it, and ought to recommend it to the Approbation and Uſe of all amongſt us. And, on the other ſide, it muſt be acknowledged by all who have conſidered it, that it is ſo fram'd, as to be capable of expreſſing the devout affections of all who bring any Devotion along with them; and of exciting, and awakening, all ſuch Religious Paſſions as are neceſſary, or becoming, in their proper Places, and upon proper Occaſions. If, therefore, you deſire any *Eſtabliſhed Form of Worſhip*, how much greater reaſon have you to be thankful, that this is ſo well ſuited to the *End* of it, than to *Separate* your ſelves from the uſe of it, becauſe it is not, in every Expreſſion, what you could wiſh it?

And as the *Eſtabliſhed Church* hath thus provided for your worſhipping *God*, as becomes *Chriſtians*; ſo alſo it is certain and evident, that there is no one Point of Duty and Practice, which you cannot be as ſecure of learning, under the *Miniſtry* of this *Church*, as of any other whatever; that you may be ſure of hearing all the Doctrines of the Goſpel honeſtly and compleatly delivered, and all the Motives of it fairly and affectionately propoſed. The Portions of Holy Scripture that

make up a conſtant part of the daily Service, are of excellent uſe to this purpoſe: and the Preaching of the *Miniſters* in this *Church*, is, at leaſt, as ſufficient for this *End*, as *any* that is oppoſed to it. Nor need I uſe more words upon this Head, becauſe the Matter is too plain, and manifeſt, to be denied.

What is it, therefore, that can induce you to leave the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, under pretence of *Edification*? The *Liturgy* of it is ſo framed, that you may praiſe God, and pray to him, in every reſpect as becomes the beſt *Chriſtians*: And if it do not ſeem, at firſt hearing, ſo moving, and affecting as you could wiſh; you ought to be willing to think, that it proceeds rather from ſome defect in *your ſelves*, than from the coldneſs of *that*; and to conſider, that it is fully ſufficient for the expreſſing, and exciting, all the devout Affections that are neceſſary to *Chriſtians* aſſembled together. And the *Teaching* part is ſo managed, that you cannot fear the want of any neceſſary and uſeful *Inſtructions*. And if you can worſhip *God*, and be taught to live, in all reſpects, like *Chriſtians*, as well in the *Communion* of the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, as in any *Separate Congregation*; then, certainly, *there is nothing wanting in the* Conſtitution *of this* Church, *that you can ſuppoſe neceſſary to your private* Edification. The *ſecond* Propoſition I undertook to ſpeak to, under this Head, will not require ſo many Words, *viz.*

2. *That, after your private* Edification *is thus far conſulted, it is your Duty to regard the publick* Edification *of the whole* Church *of* Chriſt. This, I ſay, will not require much Illuſtration, becauſe I have already touched upon it; and becauſe all

thoſe

thoſe acknowledge the Truth of it, in other Words, who ever plead for Peace; all who argue for *Conceſſions*, or for *Conformity* on any Terms; all who acknowledge that *Chriſtians* are concern'd in the good of their *Brethren*, and the Happineſs of the World about them. And who is there ſo little acquainted with the Nature and Deſign of the *Chriſtian Religion*, that doth not acknowledge this: And that is not ſenſible what a Streſs the *Goſpel* lays upon the *Social Virtues*, and with how much Affection it recommends to us the Advantage and Intereſt of the whole *Chriſtian Church?* Firſt, indeed, we are to regard our ſelves, ſo far as to ſecure our own Innocence, and to pay that Worſhip to *God*, which is due to him: But after this is ſecured, He that moſt tenderly regards the Peace of Humane Society, and the Happineſs of his *Chriſtian Brethren*, is moſt likely to be high in the Glory of *God*, and in the Favour of his Lord and Maſter. And if the conſiderations of *Peace* and *Love*, be not of force enough to induce us to *Conform* to a particular *Settled*, or *Eſtabliſhed Church*, in which we can Worſhip God acceptably, and promote our own Salvation; then certainly, *Peace*, and *Love*, are inſignificant Trifles, and not worthy to be put in the Balance againſt the leaſt Fancy, or Humour of our own. But this cannot be: And we have more reaſon, from almoſt every Page of the *New Teſtament*, to think, that one who frequents the *eſtabliſhed* Worſhip, not becauſe it is the moſt acceptable to him, or moſt agreeable to his preſent Sentiments, but only on the account of *Peace*, and for fear of giving Encouragement to ſuch Diſtinctions as may prove the occaſion of much *Enmity* and *Ill-will* amongſt Chriſtians; that this Man, I ſay, ſhall never

never find any reaſon to complain of the ſmall and inconſiderable Defects of it, and ſhall be found at laſt, to have conſulted even his own private *Edification*, much more than thoſe who have followed other Methods, and acted upon other Principles. But I am to ſhew,

3. *That you cannot conſult the* Edification *of the* Church *of* Chriſt *more effectually than by promoting* Peace *and* Concord *among* Chriſtians. *Knowledge*, ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 8. 1. *puffeth up, but Charity edifieth.* And the Conſequence of this is, that every thing that can promote *Charity* and *Concord* amongſt *Chriſtians*, is to be the great Employment of their Lives; and every thing that tends to deſtroy thoſe great goods, and to promote *Strife* and *Diſcord*, is conſcientiouſly to be avoided by them. No Society was ever *built up*, and made ſolid and durable, in any other Methods, but thoſe of *Concord*; whereas the moſt ſolid and firm Societies in the World, have been diſturbed and diſſipated, and totally ruined by *Diſcord*. What then do we think will become of that *Chriſtian Society* to which we belong, if we think much to diſregard our own private Humours and Fancies for the ſake of the *Publick*, and go on to perſue ſuch Methods, as have already enflamed us againſt one another, and daily prove the Cauſes of much *Ill-will* and Hatred amongſt us? Was the Chriſtian Church ever *edified*, or built up, by the *Strife* and *mutual Animoſities* of thoſe who compoſed it? Or, can we hope to deliver it down ſecure and unſhaken to Poſterity, by ſuch a Behaviour? Who would think that *Chriſtians* ſhould not be ready to ſacrifice any private Opinion to the Intereſt of their common *Chriſtianity?* And yet, we live in thoſe unhappy Times, in which

Chriſtians

Christians are rather labouring to find out Arts to ruine the *common Cause*, than willing to bend their own Designs and Opinions to the support of it; and are rather studious to keep alive the miserable Distractions of the *Church* of *Christ*, than ready to cure and compose them, even by the easiest and most commendable Methods. Nothing adds so much Glory to the *Christian Church*, as the *Union* of *Christians*: And as nothing gives more Beauty to it, so nothing gives more Strength than this. Nothing makes it more firm, and happy, in it self; and nothing renders it more aimable in the Eyes of others, or gains more *Proselytes* to it. Nothing consequently can more consult the *Edification* of the *Christian Church*, than to promote *Peace* and *Love* amongst *Christians*; and nothing can more become *you*, than to make this the great *End* of your Actions: especially considering, that you cannot consult the *Edification* of the *Christian Church*, without consulting your own private *Edification*; and that it is impossible you *your selves* should be more effectually *edified*, than by regarding the *Publick Good*, and by promoting the Practice of those peaceable and charitable Virtues, which make up so great a Part of the *Gospel*.

And since it is so apparent, that your private *Edification* may be sufficiently promoted in your *Communion* with the *Established Church*; that, after that Point is secured, it is your Duty to regard the *Edification* of the *Church* of *Christ*; and that you cannot consult the *Edification* of the *Christian Church* more effectually, than by promoting *Peace* and *Concord* amongst *Christians*: I need not tell you what follows from hence. For, if it be your indispensable Duty to promote *Peace* and

and *Concord* amongſt *Chriſtians*, then you are indiſpenſably obliged to avoid whatever tends to *Uncharitableneſs* and *Diſſenſion* amongſt them. And, if the Method in which you are at preſent engaged, do manifeſtly give occaſion to conſtant Diſcord and Violence amongſt us, remember, that you are to anſwer for it: And what Account will you be able to give of it, when you cannot deny, but that you might have been in a ſecure way to Heaven, without entring upon this Method? Judge therefore, in your ſelves, whether you can do any thing more worthy of the Name of *Chriſt*, than to help to put an end to the Miſery and Shame of *this* part of the *Chriſtian* World, by uniting with that *Church* from which you have Separated. And, from all this laid together, judge in your ſelves, whether there be any thing in the *Argument* commonly drawn from *Edification*, ſufficient to divert you from *conſtant Conformity* to it.

VII. But, notwithſtanding what hath been hitherto urged, you may perhaps think, that the *Toleration*, allowed by the ſame *Laws* which have *eſtabliſhed* the *Church* of *England*, hath wholly taken off your Obligation; and diſſolved all that Neceſſity, you might otherwiſe have been under, of *conforming* to the *Church* of *England*. Now, ſuppoſing it to be in the power of a *Toleration* to leave you ſo far at liberty, pray conſider, whether the *toleration* which you alledge, was ever deſigned to give this Liberty to ſuch as acknowledge *Communion* with the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, to be lawful; and conſequently, whether the very deſign of the *Toleration*, do not rather condemn, than acquit *you*. But it ſignifies little, in our preſent *Cauſe*, whether this be ſo or no. For I argue not meerly

ly from the *Eſtabliſhment* of the *Church* by *civil Laws:* But from thoſe Obligations to regard the *Peace*, and *Concord* of *Chriſtians*, which are ever the ſame, with, and without, the Interpoſition of the *civil Power*. It is ever the Duty of *Chriſtians* to have the ſame ſacred Regard to them; and ſuch a Duty as can never be diſpenſed with. So that were the *Church* of *England* only the ſettled Church of the Place, without the *Eſtabliſhment* of *civil Laws*, your Obligations to *Conformity* would be ſtill indiſpenſable; becauſe you could not conſult the *Publick Happineſs*, and *Peace*, without it. Nor can any *Toleration* diſſolve theſe Obligations; becauſe no *Toleration* can diſſolve your Obligations to conſult the *Publick Happineſs*, and *Peace*, as much as you poſſibly can. This remains the Duty of a *Chriſtian* for ever: Nothing can diſengage him from it, but the utter Impoſſibility of the thing, or the Inconſiſtency of it with his own Innocence, and eternal Salvation.

But when you ſpeak of *Toleration*, the very mention of it cannot but put you in mind, that the *Church* of *England* hath not only *Preſcription*, and a *ſettled Poſſeſſion*, to plead for it ſelf, but alſo an *Eſtabliſhment* by *civil Authority*, as well as *Eccleſiaſtical*. And, therefore, if you ſhould fix it only upon *this*, as you often do, yet this is ſufficient to condemn your Diſregard to it; as long as any Regard is acknowledged to be due to the Injunctions, and Preſcriptions, of *lawful Authority*. For when any particular *Church* is *eſtabliſhed* by the *civil Authority* of a Land, *Conformity* to it is made the expreſs Command of that *Authority*, and is required of all who judge it to be lawful: And *Non-Conformity* in ſuch, becomes not only a Neglect of the *Peace* and *Happineſs* of Society, but

also an Act of *Disobedience* to *Lawful Authority*. The Design of the *Establishment* could be no other, but that *all* should conform to this *Church*, who can possibly do it with a safe Conscience: And consequently, the *Toleration* cannot be supposed contrary to the very Design of the *Establishment*. But, however that be, our Obligations to consult the *Peace*, and *Concord* of *Christians*, can be dissolved by no humane Permissions; and consequently, the *Toleration* cannot dissolve them. And from both these it follows, that the *Toleration* cannot, in the least, affect the Duty of *constant Communion* with the *Church* of *England*, or excuse *you* in your Neglect of it.

VIII. I come now to examine *another Reason*, too commonly urged against *constant Communion* with the *Church* of *England*: And that is founded upon a mistaken Notion of a *Catholick Spirit*, and of *Christian Moderation*. For it is said by many of you, that *Constant Conformity* to this particular *Church* is utterly inconsistent with true *Moderation*, and that Charitable and *Catholick Spirit* that becomes a *Christian*. Now, in reply to this, I shall endeavour to make it appear,

1. *That true* Christian Moderation *is of such a Nature, that it will it self incline and lead you to* constant Conformity *with the* Church *of* England.

And,

2. *That* constant Conformity *is perfectly consistent with a true* Catholick Spirit, *and the most extensive* Christian Charity.

And if these *two* Points can be clearly made out, they will entirely remove out of the way this *Objection* against your *constant Communion* with the *Church* of *England*.

1. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew you, *that true* Chriſtian Moderation, *is of ſuch a Nature, that it will, it ſelf, incline and lead you to* Conſtant Conformity. For *Chriſtian Moderation*, rightly ſtated, is a temper of Mind, diſpoſing us to *Peace* and *Concord*; teaching us to give up all leſſer Concerns to theſe, and to recede from what we imagine to be due to us in Juſtice, or from what we might, in ſtrictneſs of Right, lawfully inſiſt upon; to recede, I ſay, from this, for the ſake of a great and univerſal Good. And the Excellence of this *Chriſtian Grace*, in its Influence upon humane *Society*, appears from hence, that it leaves not Men at liberty, and indifferent to *Peace*, and *Concord*, till they are all ſatisfied in their Judgments, ſo far as to be of one Opinion, and to think the ſame things juſt and reaſonable in themſelves. This would be endleſs: And no one could hope to ſee *Peace* in any one *Society* in the World, upon ſuch Terms; there being little reaſon to hope for an univerſal Agreement in the ſame Notions. But *Moderation*, as it was ſincerely deſigned to promote the Peace of *Society*, ſo it takes a more effectual Courſe than this, to accompliſh its Deſign. For it teaches, and obliges, thoſe that differ never ſo widely in their Opinions concerning leſſer Matters, to unite, and agree, for the ſake of ſomething that is of more Weight and Importance. *Moderation*, it is true, doth not oblige us to alter our Judgment about the Reaſonableneſs, or Unreaſonableneſs; the Juſtice, or Injuſtice, of any particular Matter: But it doth what is much more likely to contribute to the Happineſs of the World; for it obliges us to give up a Right, and to recede from what appears to us to be a reaſonable Demand, rather than to give the leaſt occaſion to the diſturbance, and un-

happineſs, of *Society*. So that it appears to be the great buſineſs of *Moderation*, to induce us to practiſe all *lawful* things for the ſake of *Peace*, and *Concord*, amongſt Chriſtians. And conſequently, your *conſtant Conformity* to the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, being, in your own Judgments, lawful, *Chriſtian Moderation* is ſo far from inclining you to refuſe it, that it doth, it ſelf, lead you to it; as it leads you to all Acts of Compliance, and Condeſcenſion, for the ſake of a great, and univerſal Good. This I think a true Account of *Chriſtian Moderation*, and particularly of that Place in the *New Teſtament*, where St. *Paul* preſcribes to *Chriſtians*, that their *Moderation be known unto all Men.*

But ſuppoſing this be not an exact Account of this Matter, yet I am certain, that here is nothing laid down, but what is apparently the Duty of every *Chriſtian*: And if that be ſo, it is of ſmall Importance whether He be obliged to this Duty by the Precepts of *Moderation*, or by ſome other Precepts of the *Goſpel*. It is certain, that your Obligations to conſult the *Peace* and *Happineſs* of *Society*, cannot be anſwered, unleſs you are ready to give up all leſſer Conſiderations to *theſe*. Nay, it is certain, that all the Precepts in the *Chriſtian Religion*, that concern *Peace*, and *Concord*, are vain, and uſeleſs, unleſs this Method be taken. For can you poſſibly hope, or expect, to ſee ſuch an Agreement amongſt *Chriſtians*, as we all pretend to wiſh for, if we muſt wait till they are all perſuaded of the Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of one anothers Demands? Till they are of the ſame Opinion, in thoſe Points in which they now differ? We may as well expect a Reconciliation, and Agreement, between the moſt diſtant things in Nature. But here is a plain and eaſie way to *Peace*,

and

and *Concord*; if *Christians* would be perſuaded not to break the *Peace* of *Society*, for the ſake of any matter of leſs Importance; for the ſake of what they might omit, without endangering their own eternal Happineſs. This is a *Method*, of all others, the moſt level to all Capacities; it being no difficult matter to determine whether ſuch a particular Behaviour be conducive to the publick *Peace*, or contrary to it; and every Man being his own Judge of the *Lawfulneſs*, or *Unlawfulneſs* of any Practice. So that this Method ought to be acceptable to you, as it is the only probable way, to come to any tolerable degree of *Peace* amongſt *Chriſtians*.

It is a very bad Notion of *Moderation*, that is embraced by too many, who think it the buſineſs of this *Grace* to make us indifferent how we behave our ſelves in leſſer Matters, provided we hold to the main, and fundamental Points of *Religion*. For it cannot be the deſign of *Moderation* to break in upon any other Precepts of the *Goſpel*, or upon any of the Dictates of ſound *Reaſon*. And ſince it is certain, that the *Peace*, and *Happineſs* of *Society*, is moſt paſſionately recommended to the care, and regard of Chriſtians; it is as certain, that *Moderation* cannot diſſolve the Obligations of *Chriſtians* to have a tender Concern for the good of the whole *Church*, or make it an indifferent Matter to them, which way of Behaviour they chuſe: But, whatever the true Notion of it be, it certainly leaves them under the ſame Obligations to promote *Peace*, to which the Laws of their *Maſter* have bound them up.

But there is yet another Notion of this *Virtue*, according to which it is declared by ſome, to be the Nature, and Office, of *Chriſtian Moderation*, to

regulate

regulate our Opinions concernining every thing, and to teach us not to value any thing above what it deſerves, and not to lay a greater weight upon any Matter, than the Nature of it requires. Now, though this cannot be a juſt Account of that *Moderation* we find ſpoken of in the *New Teſtament*, yet it is certain, that it is our Duty to fix juſt Notions of things in our Minds, and to value every thing according to its Excellence, and no farther. And if any Perſons think fit to call it by the Name of *Moderation*, it is not worth while to diſpute that Point. But I muſt then obſerve, that *Moderation*, in this Notion of it, hath not the leaſt Tendency, in it's Nature, to hinder your *Conſtant Conformity* to the *Church* of *England*, or to induce you to give any Encouragement to a *Separation* from it. For if it be the peculiar Office of *Moderation* to keep your Value for every thing, within due Bounds; and to regulate it ſo that it be not placed upon any Object in an undue Meaſure: It will, indeed, teach you to value every thing leſs than your own eternal Salvation; but it cannot teach you to undervalue the *Peace* and *Concord* of *Chriſtians*, as Trifles of no Importance. No, the Value of *theſe* will be always great, next to your own everlaſting Happineſs; and cannot be affected, or altered, by *Chriſtian Moderation*: Which, if it rightly ſettle the due place of every thing, will certainly fix *theſe* in a very high Degree, and make them ſecond to nothing but *Salvation* it ſelf. And, if *Moderation* it ſelf, according to this acount of it, will unavoidably lead you to this, how can you ſhew this Regard, that is apparently due to theſe goods, whilſt you refuſe that *Conformity* to a lawful *Eſtabliſhment*, which would mightily promote them;

them; and give Encouragement to those Divisions, which are the greatest Hindrances to them? And how can you be said, in this Conduct of your selves, to satisfy the Demands, and obey the Dictates, of that very *Moderation*, which you plead in your Defence; unless you suppose it becomes a *Christian* to have an indifferent and *Moderate* Regard, to that *Unity*, and *Peace*, which are the very Glory and Strength of *Christianity?*

Indeed, were there any thing in your *Constant Communion* with our *Church*, which would necessarily oblige you to place a greater Value upon any thing in the *Constitution* of it, than it really, and truly deserves; something might be urged from the Virtue of *Moderation*, in this sense of it, to defend you in your Neglect of it. But *Constant Conformity* implies not in it any thing like this. For if you have framed your Opinions so, as to think meanly of the *Publick Service* of the *Established Church*, in comparison with the ways of *Worship* set up in opposition to it; (which I cannot imagine to proceed from any thing, but *Education*, or *Custom*;) *Constant Communion* doth not oblige you to think, or declare the contrary: Nor doth it necessarily imply any thing in it, but that you do, upon some Considerations, prefer it before *Separation*; whether for its own sake, or the sake of the Publick *Peace*, and *Unity*, no one can judge from the Practice of it. And consequently, the Principles of *Moderation*, this way explained, cannot reasonably influence you against *Constant Conformity*; because *Constant Conformity* is the best way of expressing that Regard which is certainly due to *Peace*, and *Concord*; and because it implies nothing in it, that can oblige you to place an unjust Value upon any part of our *Constitution*.

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Whatſoever, therefore, be ſuppoſed to be the Nature, and Office, of *Chriſtian Moderation*, it is evident, that it muſt rather engage you *to* conſtant Communion with the *Church* of *England*, than help to influence you *againſt* it. Having thus endeavoured to ſhew you, with how little reaſon this excellent, and truly Chriſtian Grace is urged againſt the reaſonableneſs of your *Conformity*, come now to ſhew,

2. *That* Conſtant Conformity *is perfectly conſiſtent with a true* Catholick Spirit, *and the moſt extenſive* Chriſtian Charity. And this will appear by conſidering what this *Catholick* and *Charitable* frame of Spirit is, to which we are obliged by the *Chriſtian Religion*. Now, it is plain, that there is nothing in the *Goſpel* of our *Saviour*, deſigned to lay an Obligation upon us to approve, or encourage, by Words, or by Preſence, all the different ways of *Publick Worſhip* amongſt *Chriſtian Brethren*. This cannot be the Duty of *Chriſtians*; becauſe the Practice of it is impoſſible, without the utmoſt inconvenience, and diſorder: Nor did I ever yet hear of any one, who could produce one *Text* of *Scripture* to ſhew the Neceſſity of this; or who thought himſelf obliged to give equal Encouragement to all *Religious Parties* amongſt *Chriſtians* And yet, if the Encouragement be not as equal, as poſſible, I ſee not how this Obligation is ſatisfied, if there be ſuch an Obligation upon us. And we find amongſt thoſe who ſpeak moſt of this *Catholick Spirit*, that it extends not, in Practice, generally, to more than two ſorts of *Chriſtians*; and this, with a very remarkable, and conſtant Inequality. So little do theſe Perſons themſelves ſeem to think themſelves obliged to a juſt, and

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exact Practice of this imagined Duty, or to tie themſelves up to a rigorous Obſervation of it. This, therefore, cannot be included in the true Notion of that *Catholick* and *Charitable* Spirit, which becomes all *Chriſtians*; becauſe it is a Practice no where plainly recommended; and, I had almoſt ſaid, utterly impoſſible; and, in the leaſt Degree of it, highly diſorderly, and the cauſe of great Indecencies, and Improprieties, in the *Church*.

And as this is a ſufficient Reaſon for all *Chriſtians* not to think themſelves concerned in any ſuch Duty; ſo *You*, eſpecially, to whom I now ſpeak, are very peculiarly obliged to reſiſt the Progreſs of any ſuch Notions in the World, if the leaſt Concern for *Publick Peace*, and *Unity*, remain in your Breaſts. For it is often profeſſed in your Names, that you deſire an *Eſtabliſhment*; and that ſome *Amendments*, and *Abatements*, would intirely reconcile you to the preſent *Conſtitution*. This, the beſt, and greateſt of your *Miniſters* have declared, in their own Name, and in yours; and continue to this Day to do ſo. If, therefore, it be a Duty to Communicate with all *Sects* of *Chriſtians*; how can you profeſs your ſelves ready to Communicate conſtantly with the *Church* of *England*, upon ſome Terms, and to leave off all ſuch Encouragement, for the future, to any who Separate from it? But if you ſincerely deſire ſuch *Alterations* as would reconcile *you*, and make you *Conſtant Conformiſts*; how then can you think this a neceſſary Duty of *Chriſtianity*? And why do you go on to encourage ſuch Notions as muſt render vain all Attempts towards our *Unity*, and *Concord*? For if this Encouragement be due, according to the Laws of the *Goſpel*, and the Nature of *Chriſtianity*, to all the differing Parties of *Chriſtians*; then what will the beſt *Eſtabliſhment* in the World ſignifie towards the *Ends* of an *Eſtabliſhment*? No *Peace* can be this way effected; ſince there can be no Obligation upon Men, according to theſe Principles, to conform to it, were it the moſt perfect that could poſſibly be imagined.

Take care, therefore, leſt your preſent Practice oppoſe your profeſſed Deſign; and Sow not ſuch Seeds of Diſſenſion in the Land, as will utterly confound all deſigns of *Union*, and *Agreement*, and render all *Accommodations*, fruitleſs, and ineffectual. If you have the leaſt Deſire of ſuch an *Eſtabliſhment* as you could intirely comply with, entertain not theſe Principles, which ſtrike at the Root of all *Eſtabliſhments*, and prevent all the good Purpoſes of them. And if you have any Concern for *Peace*, and *Unity* amongſt us, encourage not ſuch Notions, as are inconſiſtent with that regard to *Peace* and *Unity*, which the *Chriſtian Religion* enjoyns. This is another Reaſon, why it cannot be the Duty of *Chriſtians* to give ſuch Encouragement to all the differing ways of *Worſhip* amongſt *Chriſtians*; becauſe it is the Duty of *Chriſtians* to conſult the *Peace* of the *Chriſtian Church*. And whether this be moſt likely to be done, by *Conformity* to a *lawful Eſtabliſhed Church*, or by an indifferent Encouragement of all the ſeveral *Churches*, amongſt us let any one judge. Our Duty is to do all lawful Things, for the ſake of *Peace*, and to promote *Love* amongſt *Chriſtians*: And yet many amongſt us act, as if they thought it their Duty to do every thing poſſible, in order to encourage *Diviſions*, and *Hatred*, in the *Chriſtian Church*. Why elſe do they rather chuſe to find out ſuch *new* Duties in the *Goſpel*, never heard of before in the *Chriſtian Church*, than to practice the *old*? And why do they refuſe to Walk in that Path, which leads plainly, and directly, to greater Degrees of *Unity*, and *Concord*? A true *Chriſtian Spirit* cannot direct us to ſuch a Behaviour; any more than it can direct us to diſturb the *Peace* of *Society*, and to render all deſigns of *Accomodation* ineffectual.

It is true, that it is our Duty to acknowledge all *Chriſtians* to be ſuch; to Love our Neighbour as our ſelves; to do unto all Men, as it is reaſonable for us to wiſh they would do unto us, were we in their Condition; to be kind, and tender hearted, one towards

wards another; to practice all Instances of *Humanity*, and *Charity*, towards our Brethren; to abhor all thoughts of Rigour, or Inhumanity, for the sake of any Religious Difference, and to do them all the good that is in our Power, and that is consistent with the Obligations we are under to our selves, and to the rest of the World. All this, and the like, we are strictly obliged to: But this doth not at all bring us under any Necessity of giving any Encouragement to the *Errors* of our *Brethren*; especially such *Errors* as have a bad Influence upon *Humane Society*, and prove the occasion of much Unhappiness to it: But *Christian Charity* rather obliges us to the contrary; to endeavour to convince them of their *Errors*, and to put a stop to the evil Consequences of them. But it is wonderful to hear this divine Virtue alledged against the reasonableness of *Constant Conformity*; when it is so very evident, that there is not one single Branch of of it, but what may be duly, and punctually performed by a *Christian*, in *Communion* with the *Church* of *England*. Nay, I will add, that this Grace may be practised, in greater extent, by such an one, than it can be by any who give encouragement to *Separation* from it: Because the *former* neglects no part of Charity which the *other* practises; and, besides this, shews a sacred regard to *Publick Peace*, by giving no Encouragement to any thing that is the occasion of *Uncharitableness*, or *Disturbance*, amongst Christians; which seems to be one of the first, and Principal Branches of *Charity*; and which the Person who thinks *Constant Communion* with this particular *Church* not worthy of his Regard, cannot be said to do. And, indeed, this seems to me so considerable a part of *Christian Charity*, and so necessary an Effect of a truly *Catholick Spirit*, that I cannot but think that we may draw a much better *Argument* from *these*, in behalf of your *Constant Conformity*, than any that can be urged against it. For what nobler Instance of *Christian Cha-*

rity can there be ſuppoſed, than to regard the *Peace* of the *Chriſtian Church*? And what more genuine and natural Effect of a truly *Catholick Spirit*, than to endeavour to put ſome ſtop to the Diviſions, and, conſequently, the Uncharitable Heats, among *Chriſtians*? This will ſhew the moſt *Catholick Spirit*: And, conſequently, if an *Argument* taken from *theſe*, can have any Influence upon you, it muſt determine you to *Conſtant Conformity*. At leaſt, I may have leave to ſay, that it is evident from what hath been advanced upon this Head, that there is nothing included in *theſe*, that can influence you to give any Encouragement to *unneceſſary Separations* from the *Church* of *England*; or that can be ſuppoſed inconſiſtent with the ſtricteſt *Communion* with it.

Having thus diſtinctly conſider'd ſuch of your *Reaſons* againſt *Conſtant Conformity* to the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, as ſeemed to me moſt generally, and moſt firmly, received among *You*; and having offered to your Thoughts ſome Obſervations upon them: I ſhall only propoſe a few more *Conſiderations* to you, and ſo make an End.

IX. If you judge it unlawful for you to conform conſtantly, becauſe this would be to approve, and encourage, *unneceſſary Impoſitions* in the *Chriſtian Church*, which you are bound to oppoſe, and reſiſt: I deſire you would conſider, that this will equally hold againſt *Conformity* to all *Eſtabliſhments*, becauſe none can be framed without *unneceſſary Impoſitions*; and alſo againſt our own *Eſtabliſhment*, tho' it ſhould be amended according to the Demands which have been openly made, in *your* Name, as well as the Name of your *Miniſters*. You profeſs your ſelves ready to joyn with this *Eſtabliſhment* ſo amended: And yet ſome *unneceſſary Impoſitions* will unavoidably be left in it. How then can you urge an Argument againſt *Conformity* to it, as it is at preſent; which concludes as ſtrongly againſt *Conformity* to it,

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when your Demands are answered; and you your selves are ready to comply with it. But, in truth, *Constant Conformity* doth not imply in it either the *Approbation*, or Encouragement, of *unnecessary Impositions*. It implies in it only, as I observed before, that you think fit to comply with the *Use* of them; but for what Reasons, it doth not declare. And, besides, supposing it did imply in it the Encouragement of *unnecessary Impositions* upon *Christians*, which in themselves are neither good, nor bad: On the other side, *Separation* from this Church implies in it, as much, the Encouragement of such Principles, and Practices, as make all *Unity*, and *Peace*, impossible, and impracticable. The Burthen is not so heavy yet in this *Church*, as to deserve much Zeal, and Heat against it: But remember, that if, on the one hand, you give occasion to the Imposition of *more Ceremonies*; on the other hand, you give occasion to much *Violence*, and *Uncharitableness*, whether you design it, or not. And which of the two can we think the more acceptable to God; the Man who refuses *Constant Conformity*, for fear he should encourage the Imposition of some indifferent Things; or the Man who practises it, for fear he should encourage the *Violence*, and *Uncharitableness*, that are likely to accompany all *Religious Divisions*? Certainly, it is more Praise-worthy, to submit to some *Impositions*, which had better not have been ordained, than to do any thing that tends to the disturbance of the *Christian Church*. Supposing it to be a Matter not Laudable in it self; yet certainly it is our Duty to chuse this, rather than a *greater Evil*: And it cannot be necessary for a *Christian* to resist such *Impositions*; when he cannot do it without endangering Matters of infinitely greater Moment. For the supposed, possible, Inconveniences of the *former*, are not worthy to be put into the Balance against the visible, and sensible, evil Consequences of the *latter*: Nor is there any thing to be dreaded from the *one*, comparable to that *Violence*,

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and *Uncharitableneſs*, and that *Diſhonour* to *Chriſtianity*, that is ſeen to follow from the *other*. And how then, can you think it worth a *Chriſtians's* while, to teſtify againſt *Impoſitions*, not ſinful in themſelves, at the expenſe of Publick *Peace*, and *Unity*?

X. Conſider that *your* Caſe is very different from the Caſe of *Miniſters*: And, therefore, that how hard ſoever the *Terms* of *Miniſterial Conformity* may ſeem, this cannot excuſe *you* in your *Separation*. The *Terms* of *Lay-Conformity*, in which only *you* are concerned, are few, and Lawful. I need not tell you what they are, becauſe you know by Experience, that they are not ſo intolerable, but that you can ſometimes comply with them. Nor need I add any more on this Head; and ſo ſhall only appeal to your *Miniſters* themſelves, (which I believe, I may venture to do, in this Caſe) and entreat *you* to conſult the beſt, and moſt judicious amongſt them, whether *They* ſhould have thought themſelves under an Obligation to *Separate* from the *Eſtabliſhed Church*, ſuppoſing no other *Terms* had been required of *them*, but what are now required of *you*: Or rather, whether *They* would not, upon ſuch *Terms*, have judged themſelves to be under an indiſpenſable Obligation to hold *Communion* with it, and to give all Lawful Encouragement to it. Had this been the *Caſe*, I cannot but think, if I may have leave to judge from all their Conduct, and all their Propoſals, that the *Act* of *Uniformity* would never have been complained of by them, or any material Objections urged againſt the *Terms* of their *Conformity*. And if this appear to be ſo, ſuppoſing them in your Circumſtances, this ſhould induce you to think ſeriouſly of your Behaviour; and not to diſturb the *Peace* of the *Chriſtian Church*, for the ſake of thoſe *Terms* of *Communion*, which you acknowledge to be, in themſelves, lawful.

XI. But if, after all that can be ſaid, to perſuade you to *Conſtant Conformity*, you ſhould be apt to think, that our *Diviſions* are come to ſuch an Heighth, and the Seeds

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of *Diſcord*, and *Uncharitableneſs*, ſown ſo Univerſally thro' the Land, that your *Conformity* can do but little towards reſtoring *Peace*, and *Charity*, amongſt us; and is hardly worthy of your Concern, on this Account: Conſider, that this cannot excuſe you from doing what you can, towards that glorious *End*; and let this be never ſo little, it will be accepted by God, as the only Teſtimony you can give, how highly you value them. We have not done our Duties, in our particular Stations, till we have done all in our Power, to promote *Love* and *Concord* amongſt *Chriſtians*: And if every one ſhould neglect to do this, becauſe his Influence will reach but to a ſmall Compaſs, it is impoſſible they ſhould ever be reſtored. The fewer Occaſions there be of *Strife*, and *Variance*; the more likely is true *Chriſtianity* to flouriſh, and the *Goſpel* to be well ſpoken of, in the World. And ſince your *Conformity* will remove many of theſe Occaſions at preſent; and is not unlikely, thro' the Bleſſing of God, to lay the Foundation of a laſting *Peace*, and glorious *Concord*, amongſt us, in Times to come; how can you think, that you have that Regard to theſe great Goods, which *Chriſtians* ought to have, if you ſtill neglect that *Conformity*, which is the greateſt Demonſtration you can give of your Regard to them?

XII. If, therefore, the *Terms* of your *Conformity* to the *Eſtabliſhed Church* be lawful; if you can by *this* promote *Peace*, and *Love*, amongſt *Chriſtians*; If it be your indiſpenſable Duty to do what you can towards this End, however others neglect it, and diſregard it; If you can, by your *Conformity*, highly conſult the *Edification* of the whole *Chriſtian Church*, without neglecting your own, or endangering your Salvation; If neither true Chriſtian *Moderation*, nor a *Catholick*, and *Charitable Spirit*, nor *Zeal* againſt *Impoſitions*, include in them any thing inconſiſtent with *Conſtant Conformity*: Let the Honour of that Name by which you are called; and the Senſe of thoſe Miſchiefs we feel from our miſerable Diviſions, and Diſtinctions, move you to the

Practice

Practice of it. Call to mind the Beauty, and Glory of a Compliant Temper; and think how unbecoming you are apt to judge it in others, that they will not yield up the contested Points for the sake of Peace. Look out into the World, and see what Heat and Fury our *Religious Distinctions* add to all other Contests; how much unbecoming Passion they cause amongst your selves, and amongst others who oppose you; how fatally they turn the Edge, and Bent, of Men's Minds, from Concerns of infinite Moment, to Trifles of no Consideration; how many Opportunities they will ever give our *common Enemies*, within, and without us, to carry on their Designs; and perhaps, at last, to bring about our utter Ruine. Reflect on all this, and much more that might be added; and then consider seriously with your selves, whether it can be enough for you to follow your own Inclinations, without any regard to the World of *Christians* about you; and whether it can become you to refuse to do any thing in order to put an End to these Miseries. Last of all, Think not your own *Eternal Salvation* unconcerned in this Matter: For the Precepts of the *Gospel* make it the indispensable Duty of every *Christian*, to *follow after Peace*; to avoid every *Practice* that may prove the occasion of *Uncharitableness*; and to promote *Love*, and *Concord*, in the World. And, certainly, there is Force enough in all these *Considerations*, to induce *You* to forsake the *Separation* you are engaged in, and to practice *Constant Conformity* to the *Church* of *England*.

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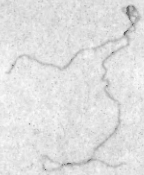
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